

State Early Action Plans

EPA Region 3 - Philadelphia - Air Protection Division

Description of activity: In 1997, EPA established a new 8-hour ozone national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS). This standard was the result of a review of ground-level ozone and related health impacts, and was to address the longer-term impact of ozone exposure at lower levels.

As part of the implementation of the new standard, states submitted area designation recommendations to the EPA in June of 2000 identifying potential ozone nonattainment areas based on air quality data from 1997-1999. During the development of these state recommendations, the potential nonattainment areas raised a number of concerns about the adverse impacts of a possible nonattainment designation.

In response, states began to investigate voluntary actions that could be implemented proactively to improve air quality and lessen the possible impact of a formal nonattainment designation in areas that marginally exceed the new standard. The most promising of all the options explored was the Early Action Compact (EAC) program. EACs are voluntary agreements by the localities, states, and the EPA to develop Early Action Plans (EAPs) to reduce ozone precursor pollutants and improve local air quality in a proactive manner, and in a shorter time than what would occur through the traditional nonattainment area designation and planning process.

The goal of EAP was to develop a comprehensive strategy to bring an area into attainment of the 8-hour ozone standard by 2007. By selecting and implementing local ozone precursor pollutant control measures that, when combined with other measures on the state and national level, are sufficient to bring the area into compliance with the standard, an area can achieve the goal. If the area successfully developed a plan that demonstrated attainment of the 8-hour ozone standard by the end of 2007, then EPA would defer the effective date of the nonattainment designation.

Region 3 has four areas that entered into EACs. Communities with Early Action Compacts will start reducing air pollution about two years sooner than required by the Clean Air Act. By reducing pollution ahead of schedule, these communities will bring substantial, sustainable health and environmental improvements to their residents sooner than would have been achieved without these agreements. States with communities participating in the Early Action Compacts submitted plans for meeting the national 8-hour ozone standard in December 2004, rather than waiting until 2007 -- the deadline for other areas not meeting the 8-hour ozone standard. Early Action Compacts require communities to: develop and implement air pollution control strategies; account for emissions growth, and achieve and maintain the national 8-hour ozone standard.

EAC areas had to attain the 8-hour ozone standard by December 31, 2007; areas not meeting this deadline will be designated nonattainment effective April 15, 2008. All of Region 3's EAC areas have attained the 8-hour ozone standard and will be designated attainment for that standard in April, 2008. Local control measures that assisted in enabling these communities to reach this goal include the following:

Roanoke Virginia (Botetourt and Roanoke Counties, the Cities of Roanoke and Salem, and the Town of Vinton):

- Reduction of Locomotive Idling - (Norfolk Southern Railway has implemented an operating policy to reduce emissions from idling locomotives as is allowed by ambient air temperature being greater than 32 degrees Fahrenheit).

Emission reductions (tons/day): 0.153 NOx

- Ozone Action Days/Public Awareness- (A program focusing on increasing the public's understanding of air quality issues in the region and increasing support for actions to improve the air quality).

Emission reductions (tons/day): 0.940 VOC and 0.610 NOx

Washington County, Maryland

- Enterprise Zone Jobs Tax Incentive- (Tax incentives to eligible companies that expand or relocate operations within Washington County. Reduction in work trip length by employees included in this program).

Emission reductions (tons/day): .18 VOC and .20 NOx

- Hagerstown Telework Center- (Provides affordable office space and equipment, including computers and high speed internet access to people who telecommute to work. The telework center provides 32 workspaces/day).

Emission reductions (tons/day): .020 VOC and .024 NOx

- Incident Management/Intelligent Transportation (This measure refers to the on-going and planned incident management programs operated by CHART in Washington County. Only Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) is being used or will be used in Washington County).

Emission reductions (tons/day): 1.93 VOC and .88 NOx

Eastern Panhandle Region, WV (Berkeley and Jefferson Counties)

- Public Awareness Program (A program focusing on increasing the public's understanding of air quality issues in the region and increasing support for actions to improve the air quality).

Emissions Reductions (tons/day): 0.72 VOC and 0.88 NOx

- Voluntary Partnership with Ground Freight Industry (A voluntary program using incentives to encourage ground freight industry to reduce emissions).

Emissions Reductions (tons/day): 0.07 VOC and 0.84 NOx

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Measures

Emissions Reductions (tons/day); 0.20 VOC and 0.12 NOx

Northern Shenandoah Valley, VA (City of Winchester and Frederick County)

- VMT Reduction (Combines individual programs/activities designed to reduce vehicle miles of travel).

Emissions Reductions (tons/day): 0.148 VOC and 0.299 NOx

- Ozone Action Days/Public Awareness

Emissions Reductions (tons/day): 0.302 VOC and 0.015 NOx

- Engine Idling Restrictions

Emissions Reductions (tons/day): 0.102 NOx